

### ABSTRACT

This contribution to Swedenborgiana deals with two different aspects of the reception of the teachings of the New Church.

Part I relates the history of French Swedenborgianism, based mainly on the discovery of the Chevrier Collection of the French translator Le Boys Des Guays's manuscripts which relate a whole century of efforts toward the establishment of the New Church in France. These efforts originated in Sweden a decade after Swedenborg's death in London in March 1772. And due to the fact that the Doctrines were confused with freemasonry, animal magnetism, somnambulism, spiritism, etc. the early "Swedenborgians" could hardly be considered as true receivers. Le Boys des Guays, however, was the great exception among them and rightly deserves to be considered as the founder of the New Church in France.

Part II includes three examples of French literary "Swedenborgianism," which should be classed among the pseudo-Swedenborgian teachings. Le Boys des Guays condemned Balzac's *Louis Lambert* and *Séraphita*. The exchange of letters between George Sand and Le Boys shows the unwillingness of the "Bonne Dame de Nohant" to adopt Le Boys' religious ideas. As far as Baudelaire and his followers in French modern poetry are concerned, their "Swedenborgianism" is as shallow as Balzac's. But should poetry and religious systems be judged together?

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## To the Memory of My Mother

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### A BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION: SWEDENBORG'S THREE JOURNEYS TO PARIS

Emanuel Swedberg was just twenty-five years old when he arrived in Paris in 1713 to complete his scientific training. A precocious scholar, he had been enrolled since the age of eleven at the University of Uppsala, where his father, Jesper Swedberg, held the position of the Army Chaplain of the Royal Regiment of Charles XI. By 1709, ten years after he began his studies, he successfully defended his thesis in Latin on the maxims of the philosopher Seneca and the mimes of Publius Syrus.<sup>1</sup> The thesis was

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<sup>1</sup>Charles-Jean-Louis Almquist et le romantisme français, Thèse pour le Doctorat de l'Université de Strasbourg, présentée to la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines June 17, 1960.

<sup>2</sup>A lecture given in the Cercle Swedenborg, Salle Alesia Chatillon, Paris, on December 7, 1974: *Cent ans de Swedenborgisme français*; English version in the *New Church Magazine*, Vol 95, Number 675, January-April 1976: *The Chevrier Collection*; Swedish version in the *Nya Kyrkans Tidning* 3-4/1977: *Ett århundrade av den Nya kyrkans historia i Frankrike*.

<sup>1</sup>L. *Annaei Senecae et Pub. Syri Mimi, forsan et aliorum Selectiae Sententiae cum annotationibus Erasmi et Graeca versione Jos. Scaligeri...*, Upsala, Werner, 1709.

R.L. Tafel, in his *Documents concerning the Life and Character of Emanuel Swedenborg*, Swedenborg Society, London 1875-1877, makes the error of naming the second author "Pub. Sirus Mimus," ignoring context of the word "mimes"; op. cit., Vol. II, Part II, p.884.

dedicated to his father, who had served in Västergötland as Bishop of the Diocese of Skara since 1702.

In present day Sweden, Jesper Swedberg is much better known than his son, Emanuel Swedenborg. He is primarily recognized as the author of numerous beautiful religious hymns, some of which are still sung today in the Lutheran Church of Sweden. Jesper Swedberg also wrote an *Autobiography* of more than a thousand pages for the benefit of his seven surviving children, two others having died in infancy. He barely mentions Emanuel in his manuscript, except for stating that although one of his children was born on an Easter Monday, Emanuel, like all the others, was born on a Sunday, as was Jesper himself and his first wife, Sara Behm, Emanuel's mother.<sup>2</sup> Sara died when Emanuel was eight years old and when Jesper Swedberg married again, it seems that Emanuel got along very well with his stepmother. In 1702 when his parents left Uppsala to settle in the Bishop's Palace in Skara, Emanuel was entrusted to the care of his oldest sister, Anna, who was later to marry Erik Benzelius Junior. Benzelius, who held the position of Chief Librarian of the University Library, was considered to be one of the most learned Swedes of all times. It is certain that he communicated an enthusiasm for studies in general and for the "exact" sciences in particular to his young brother-in-law. It was from Benzelius that Emanuel Swedberg obtained advice and letters of recommendation for his first journey abroad, which began in 1710 and which was to last for more than four years.<sup>3</sup>

The first stop on this study journey was London, where Emanuel Swedberg arrived after a very adventurous voyage whose incidents he recounted as follows:

1710. I travelled to Göteborg, and thence by ship to London. On the way to London my life was put in danger four times:

1. First from a sandbank on the English coast in a dense fog, when the keel of the vessel was within a quarter of a fathom of

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<sup>2</sup>R.L. Tafel, op. cit. Vol. I, p. 196.

<sup>3</sup>It was Emanuel Swedberg's entire journey abroad that lasted about four years, and not just his stay in England, as contends Régis Boyer in the preface of his French translation of the *Book of Dreams*, Paris, Pandora/Le Milieu, 1979, p. 9.

- the bank and all on board considered themselves nearly lost.
2. Then from the crew of a privateer, who came on board declaring themselves to be French, although we thought they were Danes.
  3. Then from an English naval ship on the following evening, which on the strength of a report, mistook us in the darkness for the privateer; wherefore it fired a whole broadside into us, but without doing us any serious damage.
  4. Afterwards in London I was soon exposed to a still greater danger. Some Swedes, who had approached our ship in a yacht, persuaded me to sail with them to town where all on board were commanded to remain for six weeks because news had spread that the plague had broken out in Sweden. Since I did not observe the quarantine imposed by the English authorities, an inquiry was made: However, I was spared from punishment with the warning that no one who ventured to do this in future would escape his doom.<sup>4</sup>

The voyage is almost too full of incidents to be credible. It is certain that Emanuel Swedberg arrived safe and sound in London, where, as well as in Oxford, he studied Newton daily, as noted in a letter he wrote to his brother-in-law, Erik Benzelius.<sup>5</sup> Although he never was able to meet Isaac Newton in person during the two and a half years of his stay in England,<sup>6</sup> he frequently encountered the astronomers John Flamsteed and Edmond Halley of the famous Royal Observatory in Greenwich and conversed with them about his method for finding the terrestrial longitude at sea by means of the moon. Moreover, he took an active and practical interest in everything that was being done in the field of mechanics.

These scientific interests may seem somewhat unusual for a university graduate with a background in letters. We know that prior to his departure from Sweden, Emanuel's father had requested that he receive instruc-

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<sup>4</sup>R. L. Tafel, *Documents*, Vol. II, Part I, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup>Emanuel Swedberg to Erik Benzelius: London, October 13, 1710.

<sup>6</sup>Inge Jonsson/Olle Hjern, *Swedenborg. Sökaren i naturens och andens världar; Hans verk och efterföljd* (Swedenborg. The researcher in the natural and in the spiritual world; His work and his followers), Stockholm, Proprius, 1976, p. 9.

tion from the famous self-taught Swedish engineer, Christopher Polhem and that this training period was to take place upon his return to Sweden. Emanuel never ceased in his efforts to prepare for this opportunity and during his travels, he perfected his knowledge of the exact sciences, which he called "mathesi"<sup>7</sup> and wrote reports to his brother-in-law that included all the new discoveries which he first learned of in England, and later on in Holland and in France.

While concentrating on the study of the sciences, Emanuel did not entirely lose his interest in poetry and philosophy. During a visit to St. Paul's Cathedral, he happened to see the tomb of Isaac Casaubon, Henry IV's former librarian, "and was inspired with such a love for this literary hero" that he kissed his tomb and improvised some verses in Latin in tribute to this great genius.<sup>8</sup>

The scientific rivalry between learned French and English scholars of this time is well documented. As a neutral observer, Emanuel Swedberg was not satisfied to return to Sweden without having heard the two differing parties. He continued on to Paris after a short stay in Amsterdam, a city which was to play a major role in the publication of Swedenborg's later works. According to his account of the trip the itinerary included Brussels and Valenciennes. It is worth noting here that Swedenborg's lengthy descriptions in his "Itineraria" are not nearly as fascinating to read as the record he kept of his "Dreams" and that both documents were written in Swedish.

Upon arriving in France, Emanuel first went to Paris, then to Versailles, and divided his stay between the two cities. What did he do? Whom did he see? What resulted from this first visit to Paris? As is the case with his two later visits to the "City of Light," little is known about this one and therefore remains a mystery. We know that Emanuel Swedberg did fall seriously ill and he had to remain inactive during a period of six weeks.<sup>9</sup> We do not know anything about the nature of his illness or who took care of him. This information is not of any great importance except perhaps to those who are concerned with Swedenborg as a deranged person rather

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<sup>7</sup> Emanuel Swedberg to Erik Benzelius: Rostock, September 8, 1714.

<sup>8</sup> Letter mentioned under footnote 5.

<sup>9</sup> Emanuel Swedberg to Erik Benzelius: Paris, August 9-19, 1713.

than a revealer of divine truths. His first revelations, however, were not to appear until some thirty years after his first trip to Paris in 1713.

While in France Emanuel studied from dawn to dusk. The rich treasures of the Royal Library fascinated him. His brother-in-law had furnished him with some letters of introduction to several French scholars, and his stay in England had provided him with additional letters of introduction. Occasionally he attended lectures in the Collège de France, whose professors he met with personally: Pierre Varignon, whose two-fold capacity as an eminent mathematician and a professor of philosophy appealed to his imagination; the astronomer Philippe de la Hire, who was an engineer, a geometrician, an architect, and also a disciple of Pascal and Descartes. Most importantly, Emanuel had learned the "Method" by reading the works of Malebranche, who was still living at the time of Emanuel's stay in Paris. Apparently he never had the opportunity of meeting with Malebranche, for if he had, he would have undoubtedly mentioned it in his correspondence to his brother-in-law. Emanuel felt at home in de la Hire's house. It is possible that there he could have met Fontanelle, a kindred spirit, the Permanent Secretary of the Royal Academy of Sciences and "one of our best scientific popularizers."<sup>10</sup> Was not this to be his own mission: to popularize the theories of the great learned men in Europe to make them bear fruit in his native Sweden? Let us not forget the enormous patriotic influence on a whole generation of Swedes of Olov Rudbeck's vast work *Atlantica*. Rudbeck was universally known as a man of science because of his discovery of the circulation of the lymph vessels and received recognition as a poet seeking to establish a link between Sweden and Plato's *Atlantis* by means of a new philological method.

Another scholar, Father Bignon, the Chaplain at the Court of Louis XIV, held much more interest for Emanuel Swedberg as an excellent mathematician rather than in his role as a priest. The purely philological method used by Jacques Lelong of the Oratory and by the Dominican Friar Le Quien to establish the original text of the Bible also interested him passionately because of the nature of their method.

Nevertheless, the stay in France was not a complete success. In addition to Emanuel's mysterious illness, we should add his disappointment

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<sup>10</sup> *Grand Larousse encyclopédique* in ten volumes, Paris, Larousse, 1962, Vol. 5, p. 107.

that the French astronomers did not accept his method for finding terrestrial longitude. When he returned to Sweden one year later, he brought with him a list of fourteen theoretical inventions, some of which were identical to those that had preoccupied Pascal and Leonardo da Vinci. On that list were perfectly feasible principles for the development of aircraft, steam engines, submarines, and submachine guns.<sup>11</sup>

While still in Paris, Emanuel Swedberg wrote a letter in which he suggested the creation of a new professorship for himself at the University of Uppsala, to be financed by a deduction from the salaries of the other titular professors. In his voluminous work on Swedenborg, Charles Byse states that this was a joke.<sup>12</sup> But in fact there is evidence to the contrary. Young Swedberg had many good qualities but at this time in his life, two of them were lacking: humor and modesty.

Facing an uncertain future, Emanuel Swedberg was compelled to find highly imaginative solutions in order to support himself. His self doubts were further reinforced by the parsimonious manner in which his father paid for his living expenses and it was on this subject that the young scholar asked his brother-in-law to intervene on his behalf.<sup>13</sup>

Upon Emanuel's return to Sweden, the ingenious Polhem was waiting for him in Uppsala, along with his two daughters. One of whom, Emerentia, could have completely changed Emanuel Swedenborg's life had she accepted his proposal of marriage. She chose not to accept, and her suitor was evidently not unduly upset about her rejection of him. It would seem that his passion for Emerentia did not equal the one he had for her father's work. In 1716, Emanuel Swedberg published the first Swedish scientific periodical: *Daedalus Hyperboreus*, which appeared for two years and was entirely devoted to the works of Christopher Polhem and his assistant, Swedberg.

This periodical met with a certain amount of success and among its readers there was the young King of Sweden: Charles XII. Intrigued by mathematics and mechanical inventions, the King asked Polhem to introduce his laboratory assistant to him. He then charged both of them with

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<sup>11</sup> Emanuel Swedberg to Erik Benzelius: Greifswald, April 4, 1715.

<sup>12</sup> Charles Byse, *Swedenborg*, Lausanne-Paris, undated, pp. 61-62.

<sup>13</sup> Emanuel Swedberg to Erik Benzelius: London, August 15, 1712.

the task of developing the locks necessary to complete his ambitious project for a canal across Sweden. The canal they designed is still used today for inland waterway traffic and connects the port of Göteborg on the North Sea with Stockholm on the Baltic, passing through the big lakes of Central Sweden. However, the construction of it was not completed until nearly a century later.

Other projects were subsequently entrusted to Polhem and Emanuel Swedberg. In 1718, just before the King's death at Frederikshald in Norway, young Swedberg was to give further proof of his mechanical skill by transporting part of the Royal Navy over logs placed on a broad isthmus measuring several tenths of a kilometer. This device allowed Charles XII to surprise the Norwegians and thereby win a battle. The King was killed in Norway shortly afterwards thus marking an end to an epoch in Swedish history.

This period of Swedish history, known in Sweden as "the time of great power," inspired Emanuel with a great sense of patriotism. In 1710, while Charles XII was in Turkey, a victory by one of his generals, Magnus Stenbock, had greatly moved Emanuel during his lengthy journey abroad. In one of his first published poems, *Festivus applausus in insignem victoriam quam... Dn Magnus Stenbock... de Danis ad Helsingburgum reportavit*, he demonstrated his admiration for this young King, who was both a warrior and a misogynist.

Upon his return to Sweden, Swedberg became personally acquainted with Charles XII. As previously mentioned, his role in the King's military strategy was not insignificant. According to August Strindberg in his play *Charles XII*, this event led to Emanuel's appointment as a permanent advisor to the King. There is, however, some lack of evidence for this, and besides, Strindberg did not always overly concern himself with historical fact. For example, in the play, Emanuel bears the name of Swedberg, even though he was called Swedberg until 1719, one year after the King's death.

The death of the King made Emanuel Swedberg's life still more difficult even though Charles XII had appointed him "extraordinary Assessor in the Royal College of Mines" just two years earlier. While waiting to be instated, which did not actually occur until 1724, he was not paid for his work. Jesper Swedberg sent several requests to the king on his behalf

asking him to raise his son to the peerage, a status which was not at all unusual for the children of Swedish bishops. In 1719 Ulrika Eleonora, the King's sister whom Parliament had chosen as his successor, granted Bishop Swedberg's request. It was then that Emanuel chose the name of Swedenborg in remembrance of Jesper Swedberg's father's home in the middle of Sweden, in Dalecarlia.<sup>14</sup>

Swedenborg's second stay in Paris lasted from the fall of 1736 to spring 1738 and was subsequently followed by a year's journey in Italy. Régis Boyer cleverly states that Swedenborg "se met en disponibilité," a play on the double meaning of the French expression: to take a vacation and also to be open to new impressions and experiences.<sup>15</sup> This stay was to serve as a hiatus in Swedenborg's life. Much like his first visit to Paris, this one had some mysterious aspects. There are two sources of information on it: first there is a very incomplete description of his stay which appeared in his *Itineraria* and secondly there is a manuscript censured by his family that describes his journey in Italy. Perhaps it contained somewhat too detailed descriptions of a relationship with a "maîtresse" in Italy whom, according to Augustus Nordenskjöld, Swedenborg pretended to have had when he was young.<sup>16</sup> As far as his time in Paris is concerned, we know for a fact that he often went to the Opéra and that he kept a record of the names of the ballet dancers and ballerinas who had pleased him. Régis Boyer reminds us that Swedenborg was also a talented amateur musician who, on occasion, served as a substitute organist in church on Sundays.<sup>17</sup>

Prior to going to Paris, Swedenborg had worked industriously and his publications earned him a reputation as a mineralogist among the learned in Europe of that time. In 1719, he had a small treatise on geology published in Swedish: *Concerning the great depth of water, and the strong tides in the primeval world; proofs from Sweden*.<sup>18</sup> Among his four other treatises published in the same year, was a *Proposal for regulating our coinage and*

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<sup>14</sup> At the distance of some kilometers from the town of Falun.

<sup>15</sup> *Book of dreams*, p. 13.

<sup>16</sup> R.L. Tafel, *Documents*, Vol. I, p. 641.

<sup>17</sup> *Book of Dreams*, p.8.

<sup>18</sup> On Wattens Högd och Förra Werldens starka Ebb och Flod; Bewis utur Swerje. Uppsala, Werner, 1719.

measures, in order to facilitate calculations and to eliminate fractions,<sup>19</sup> eight pages in which Swedenborg predicted the creation of the decimal system. Two years later, he presented his *Prodromus principiorum naturalium*, which was to constitute the first volume<sup>20</sup> of his imposing *Opera philosophica et mineralia*. This work was published in Dresden and Leipzig in 1734, where Swedenborg himself supervised the printing of the three volumes. The second volume contained a chapter on the conversion of iron into steel and was translated into French in Strasbourg in 1737 and republished in 1762 in the *Descriptions des Arts et Métiers*.<sup>21</sup> It is interesting to note that the Swedish translation of this part of the *Opera philosophica et mineralia* was translated from the French edition.<sup>22</sup>

It was also in 1734 in Dresden, that Swedenborg published a much less voluminous work, but one which held much greater importance for his future life as a revealer of divine truths: *De Infinito et causa finali Creationis: deque mechanismo operationis Animae et Corporis*. The method he employed in this treatise has been correctly defined as "materialistic," that is, only God can claim to be infinite; therefore spirit and substance are to be categorized as finite. This materialistic view was presented in greater detail later on. His *Oeconomia regni animalis* (London-Amsterdam, 1740-1741) foreshadows Il Mettrie's *Man-machine*. The animal kingdom, the human body in particular, is first explained by means of the circulation of the blood. The second volume, comprised of three chapters, is of greater interest. The first chapter describes the interaction between the brain and the lungs, the second, the importance of the cortical substance of the brain as the nerve center for the five senses and reflexes in man; the third chapter, which is less detailed, deals with a study of the *Human Soul*. This last chapter is extremely important because Swedenborg devoted his attention to its subject from then on until the end of his natural life.

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<sup>19</sup> *Förslag til vårt Mynts och Måls indelning, så räkningen kan lättas och alt Bråk afskaffas*, Stockholm, Kongl. Boktryckeriet (Royal Printing House), 1719; reprinted in 1795.

<sup>20</sup> Inge Jonsson errs when he states that it was reproduced in the *third* volume of *Opera...* Jonsson/Hjern, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>21</sup> Jacques Matter, *Emmanuel de Swedenborg. Sa vie, ses écrits et sa doctrine*, Paris, Didier & Cie, 1863, p. 40.

<sup>22</sup> In the Library of the Royal Academy of Sciences, Stockholm, I found the following work: *Utdrag af några Herr Assessor Suedenborgs Anmärkningar om Ståhl. Öfversatte från Fransöskan* (Excerpts of some remarks made by Assessor Suedenborg (Sic!) on Steel, translated from French). Stockholm, printed by Peter Jöransson Nyström, 1753.

But his spiritual life just began. In fact, the period to follow was that of *Dreams*, revelations, of the *Arcana Coelestia* and the *Diarium Spirituale*. During this period, Swedenborg's third and last stay in Paris was to serve a highly important purpose. But let us not anticipate! In 1743, Swedenborg asked for and obtained a new leave in order to go to Germany, Holland and England to write his *Regnum Animale*, the continuation or further development of his *Oeconomia*. According to his plan, this work was to be composed of 17 volumes, but only the three first volumes appeared. Swedenborg's life was to be profoundly changed after the religious crisis to which his *Dreams* in 1743-1744 led him.

Swedenborg had already begun to foresee a new direction in his life as early as 1741 when he wrote three small but extremely important manuscripts. Anyone who wishes to understand the science of correspondences will find the material in them most valuable in studying his later works. The table of contents of the first of these manuscripts: *Introductio ad Psychologiam Rationalem, cujus haec ceconda pars de Doctrina Correspondentiarum et Repraesentationum agit*, illustrates the point. In a short preface Swedenborg outlines the differences between natural language and spiritual language. He then devotes a chapter to each of the following categories of correspondences: *correspondentia harmonica*, *correspondentia parabolica*, *correspondentia typica* and *correspondentia fabulosa et somniorum*, before tackling the main subject of his treatise: the explanation of the Holy Scripture.

The second of the series of manuscripts written in 1741: *Clavis Hieroglyphica arcanorum naturalium et spiritualium per viam Repraesentationum*, is comprised of twenty-one examples of texts about the natural world from which are drawn principles applicable to the spiritual world by means of the science of correspondences. The third work, *Transactio prima de Anima et ejus et Corporis Harmonia in genere*, explains the imperfect communication between the Soul and the Body, and is the only one of the series to have been published, although numerous pages are missing.<sup>23</sup> It is essential to note here that these three manuscripts precede the period of the *Dreams* and Swedenborg's religious crisis, a fact that the biographers of the Swedish revelator of divine truths ignore when they fail to see the

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<sup>23</sup>R.L. Tafel, *Documents*, Vol. II, p. 929.

continuity that existed between the different stages of his life. However, there seems to be general consensus that Swedenborg used the same method for describing what he had seen and heard during his visits to the spiritual world and for explaining natural phenomena in his scientific treatises. Régis Boyer's preface to his French translation of the *Book of Dreams* is extremely well done, but for those of us who are students of Swedenborg's entire life and his complete body of works, two further observations are necessary. First, the 1741 manuscripts tell us something of Swedenborg's preparation as revelator. Secondly, after the 1859 edition was published by the Chief Librarian of the Royal Library in Stockholm, G. E. Klemming, *The Book of Dreams* became the subject of a New Church publication.<sup>24</sup>

It is evident that the supposed embarrassment to Swedenborg's followers caused by this manuscript never really existed because they wanted, on the contrary, to publish the text of these dreams themselves, with some deletions of the most daring passages of the master's manuscript. It should be noted that the passages in question were, in fact, published in the *Documents* by R. L. Tafel.<sup>25</sup>

In Swedenborg's accounts of his dreams at night as an elderly bachelor, he sought to give a spiritual meaning to his often nightmarish sensations. In marked contrast to the nature of some of his dreams he wrote: *De Cultu et Amore Dei*, an uncompleted but very beautiful explanation of the first chapters of the *Book of Genesis*, which is the subject of an erudite thesis by Inge Jonsson.<sup>26</sup> This is certainly Swedenborg's poetical masterpiece, reminding us both of Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*, but of an unquestionable originality.

The publication of the *Hexameron* in London in 1745, coincided with a vision he had in an inn, during which an angel representing "Lord God,

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<sup>24</sup>In the *Catalogue général des livres imprimés de la Bibliothèque Nationale. Oeuvres séparées*, I found, under no. 112: *Reflexioner öfver de nyligen uppdagade Swedenborgs drömmar, 1744, hvilka derjemte oförörändrade bifogas* (Thoughts on Swedenborg's dreams written in 1744 and which were recently discovered and published in this volume without any changes). Stockholm; imprimé chez J. et A. Riis, 1866, In-8, XXIV-94 p. (Hyde 430) / 8 R.13476/ (Published by Anna-Frederika Ehrenborg).

<sup>25</sup>R.L. Tafel, *Documents*; Vol. II, Part II: Doc. 209, pp. 149-219.

<sup>26</sup>I. Jonsson, *Swedenborgs skapelsedrama De Cultu et Amore Dei* (Swedenborg's Hexameron: De Cultu and Amore Dei), Thesis defended at the University of Stockholm in 1961.

the Creator of the world and the Redeemer" appeared and said to Swedenborg, "Do not eat so much!" The angel subsequently reappeared to tell him that he had been chosen by the Lord to explain the spiritual meaning of the Holy Scripture to mankind and that what he was to write would be dictated to him. Thus the "Mundus Spirituum et coelum" was opened to Swedenborg. He decided at once to give up the study of the worldly sciences and to labor "in spiritual things."<sup>27</sup>

From then on, during a quarter of a century, the famous learned Swedish scholar and member of several scientific academies,<sup>28</sup> worked anonymously always adding "ex auditis et visis" to his book titles to indicate that the contents were not a matter of fiction but were, in fact, his actual experiences. It is important to recognize that Swedenborg did not consider himself to be the author of these treatises, but only the privileged revealer of divine truths. This did not prevent a broad distribution of his works, especially among universities and dioceses.

The task that Swedenborg undertook required a full devotion of his energies. In 1747, he asked for and obtained retirement from his position of Assessor of the Royal College of Mines and he subsequently received half his salary. As an owner of several mines which provided him with additional income, Swedenborg was fairly well off financially. Although the Swedish system of censorship made it impossible for him to publish in his own country, he had sufficient personal resources that allowed him to spend most of the remaining twenty-five years of his life abroad, mainly in London and Amsterdam where he could publish his treatises under more favorable conditions.

In London, he published eight volumes of *Arcana Coelestia* between 1749 and 1756. Five small tracts containing summaries of his *Arcana* followed in 1758. Among them was *De Caelo et ejus Mirabilibus, et de Inferno* (*Heaven and Hell*), the best known of Swedenborg's books. He also published *De Equo Albo, de quo in Apocalypsi, Chap. XIX, et dein de Verbo et ejus*

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<sup>27</sup> Jonsson/Hjern, *Swedenborg*, pp. 103-104.

<sup>28</sup> As early as in 1734, the Academy of St. Petersburg elected Swedenborg a member (Pierre Larousse, *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX siècle*, Paris, 1895, p.1294). Later, Linnaeus, who was one of Swedenborg's cousins, asked the Royal Academy of Sciences in Stockholm to elect Swedenborg as a member, a fact which Edouard Richer omitted when he wrote his essay on *Linnaeus and Swedenborg*, published in the *Nouvelle Jerusalem*, Nov. 1839, pp. 268-272, reproduced in Vol. 1 of *Mélanges*, Saint-Amand, 1861.

*sensu spirituali seu interno, ex Arcanis Caelestibus* (*The White Horse of the Apocalypse*), *De Nova Hierosolyma et ejus Doctrina Caelesti: ex auditis e caelo* (*The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrines*), which was later published in French in 1782, by Benedict Chastanier. Pernety published *Heaven and Hell* in French in 1782 and translated another work, *Telluribus in Mundo nostro Solari* (*The Earths in the Universe*) into French. *De ultimo Judicio, et de Babylonia Destructa* (*The Last Judgment And Babylon Destroyed*), was also published in a French translation attributed to Benedict Chastanier.

Swedenborg began his work on the drafts of these works in 1741. In the introductory portion of *The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrines*, he noted that he preferred to present several small tracts as opposed to a longer dissertation. Since his *Arcana* had no buyers, not even *Volume Two*, which he had had translated from Latin into English, he felt obligated to present his work in an abridged form. These smaller works immediately found a much wider circle of readers than had his *Arcana*. We are extremely fortunate to have his *Diarium spirituale* containing over 6,000 numbered statements in which Swedenborg describes his encounters in Heaven and Hell during nearly twenty years beginning in 1747 and which gives us a record of his daily life among angels and spirits during this important period of his life.<sup>29</sup>

Some of these statements, which he called “memorabilia,” later served as points of departure for more voluminous treatises published by Swedenborg in the 1760s. Included among these are: *Sapientia Angelica de Divino Amore et de Divina Sapientia* (*Divine Love and Wisdom*) (Amsterdam, 1763), whose subject was partially dealt with again in the following year in his *Sapientia Angelica de Divina Sapientia* (Amsterdam, 1764), *Apocalypsis Revelata* (*Apocalypse Revealed*) (Amsterdam, 1766) and *Delitiae Sapientiae de Amore Conjugiali; post quas sequuntur voluptates insaniae de Amore Scortatorio* (*Conjugal Love*) (Amsterdam, 1768), which was the first of Swedenborg’s religious works signed: “ab Emanuele Swedenborg, Sueco” (by Emanuel Swedenborg, Swede.)

What could account for this change in custom? Why, after twenty years of writing, did Swedenborg suddenly put his name on the title page

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<sup>29</sup> Jonsson/Hjern, *Swedenborg*, p. 23.

of his books? Perhaps we should look to the first followers of the doctrines of the New Church for an explanation. All of them were personal friends of Swedenborg's: in London, Dr. Messiter and the Reverend Thomas Hartley; and in Göteborg, Dr. Beyer and Dr. Rosén. The correspondence exchanged between Swedenborg and Dr. Beyer (nineteen letters from Swedenborg, 1765-1771<sup>30</sup>) yields some interesting information on Swedenborg's third stay in Paris, a period that was to play an important role in the future. Swedenborg spoke of this journey in mysterious terms: "In about a month, I will leave from here and go to Paris with a purpose that I must not yet reveal."<sup>31</sup>

What was this secret mission? Without a doubt, it was connected with a publication that Swedenborg had in mind. Much has already been said about this subject, but let us deduce that the publication in question was not the *True Christian Religion*, as has often been stated, but rather *De Commercio Animae et Corporis*. The *Vera Christiana Religio* appeared some two years later in Amsterdam and its publication was preceded in the spring of 1769 by the *Summaria Expositio Doctrinae Novae Ecclesiae*, a summary of all the teachings of the New Church ending with the following creed: the belief in one God, Jehovah Jesus-Christ in a glorified human form, in the Holy Scripture as God's Word or the Divine Truth itself, in the regeneration of the soul by means of good works, in Heaven and Hell, in the Lord's Second Coming having already taken place and in the advent of the New Church, called the New Jerusalem.

As far as the treatise on the *Intercourse between the Soul and the Body* is concerned, R. L. Tafel asserted that it was a response to attacks made by Immanuel Kant.<sup>32</sup> Tafel's laborious efforts to prove that the publication dates were falsified are not convincing. On the other hand, Swedenborg provided a résumé in this treatise on the theories of Aristotle, Descartes and Leibnitz on the problem of "influx." This was certainly the reason why Swedenborg hoped for a wide distribution of this small tract. Furthermore,

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<sup>30</sup> R.L. Tafel, *Documents*, Vol. II, Part II, pp. 238-310.

<sup>31</sup> Swedenborg to Dr. Beyer: Amsterdam, March 15, 1769.

<sup>32</sup> R.L. Tafel, *Documents ...*, Vol. II, Part II, p. 1009

it was subsequently translated into English as early as 1770, into German in 1772 and into French in 1785.<sup>33</sup>

Swedenborg was obliged to go to London in order to publish the treatise which he had not been able to publish in Paris. He had previously applied to the Censor Chevreuil to receive tacit permission. Chevreuil did not oppose the publication on principle and even made the suggestion that Swedenborg consider putting the words "Printed in Amsterdam" on the cover of the book. Since the Swedish revealer of divine truths did not wish to consent to such an arrangement, he made the decision to relinquish his publication project in Paris and then went on to London where the *Intercourse between the Soul and the Body* appeared that same year, 1769.

However, the renunciation of his plans to publish in Paris does not entirely explain a mysterious attitude Swedenborg manifested in a letter written to Dr. Beyer. Is it possible that Swedenborg was associated in some way with the activity of a secret society? It will be shown later on in this work that there is absolutely no proof that Swedenborg was in touch with Freemasons in Paris. Neither Pernety, nor Chastanier knew him,<sup>34</sup> nor did the future translator of his religious works J. P. Moët, the Royal Librarian in Versailles who was also elected in 1766 to serve as the president of the "Grande Loge de France" in 1766.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, we do know that a secret order, the *Firmament*, had just been founded in Stockholm and that it had attracted a number of well known Swedes. Among the membership was the Swedish Ambassador to Paris, Count Gustav-Philip Creutz. It was to Creutz that Swedenborg made an appeal in order to have himself cleared of the accusation of having been expelled from France. This accusation was based upon a statement published in Jac. Jon. Björnståhl's description

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<sup>33</sup> *A Theosophic Lucubration on the Nature of Influx, as it respects the communication and operation of Soul and Body*, London, M. Lewis, 1770. The translator was the Reverend Thomas Hartley.

*Emanuel Swedenborg's Traktat von der Verbindung der Seele mit dem Körper*. No place indicated, 1772. *Du Commerce établi entre l'Ame et le Corps ou Traité de la liaison qui existe entre le spirituel et le matériel*. Fidèlement rendu du Latin d'Emmanuel Swedenborg. Par le Traducteur de la Nouvelle Jerusalem et sa Céleste Doctrine (Parraud-Chastanier). Edition augmentée du *Discours préliminaire* de Th. Hartley, Docteur en Théologie, etc.

<sup>34</sup> See the corresponding chapters in this book.

<sup>35</sup> According to Georg Kloss, the author of the *Bibliographie der Feimaurerei und der mit ihr in Verbindung gesetzten geheimen Gesellschaften*, Frankfurt-am-Main, Druck und Verlag von Johann David Sauerländer, 1844.

of his *Journey to France, Italy, etc.*, and the paragraph in question is rather innocuous:

I had almost forgotten to relate that Mr. Swedenborg came here (to Paris) last Summer, bringing with him a book he had printed in Holland, entitled *Summaria Expositio Doctrinae Novae Ecclesiae, quae par novam Hierosolyman in Apocalypsi intelligitur*, ab Emanuele Swedenborg, Amsterdam, 1769, pages 4 - 67. From Paris, he traveled afterwards to London. He also printed a book here (?) (sic) which I have not yet received. He was forbidden to have it published here, which hastened his departure to London.<sup>36</sup>

Probably the last sentence has been incorrectly interpreted. Nevertheless, Swedenborg's third and last stay in Paris was more or less a failure. Curiously, statements were made during Swedenborg's second stay in Paris between 1736 and 1738, that could have also resulted in his banishment. According to the American Freemason the Reverend Samuel Beswick in his book on the *Swedenborg Rite*, Swedenborg may have attended a meeting of Freemasons in Paris. Discovery of such a meeting would have certainly led to condemnation since freemasonry was in violation of the French laws of the time. Being both a visitor and a foreigner would have resulted in Swedenborg's expulsion rather than imprisonment.<sup>37</sup> One cannot completely exclude the possibility that Swedenborg had attended the said meeting as a curious observer, just as he attended the church belonging to the Moravian Brethren during his stays abroad without being a member of this sect.<sup>38</sup> The lengthy interval that elapsed between the time of the meeting and Swedenborg's departure for Italy, some two and a half months, weakens the supposition that he was expelled. Besides, Swedenborg never mentioned this matter. It is true that some pages were torn out of his journal of this period, but these pages presumably contained too intimate a description of his sentimental adventure in Italy.

After Paris, Swedenborg journeyed on to London for the next to the last time. In 1771, after a stay in Stockholm, he went to Amsterdam in

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<sup>36</sup> R.L. Tafel, *Documents*, Vol. II, p. 701.

<sup>37</sup> R.L. Tafel, *Documents*, Vol. II, Part II, p. 738.

<sup>38</sup> R.L. Tafel, *Documents*, Vol. II, Part I, pp. 196 and 214.

order to publish his *True Christian Religion* before a final voyage to London. It was there that he died from an attack of apoplexy on March 29, 1772, the very date predicted in a letter he wrote to John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church, who, according to Swedenborg's revelations from the spiritual world, had wanted to meet with him.<sup>39</sup>

Before his death, Swedenborg consented to receive the pastor of the Swedish Church in London, the Reverend Arvid Ferelius, who administered the last sacrament to him after having asked him to renounce his faith in the doctrines of the New Church. This Swedenborg refused to do, contrary to the statements of his detractors. It must be pointed out, however, that Swedenborg never founded any form of organized religion and that his writings deal only with spiritual truths. Nevertheless, Swedenborg himself and, above all, his first followers in Sweden, Dr. Beyer and Dr. Rosén in Göteborg, had had a long and painful fight to free themselves from the accusations of heresy. In this case the master suffered far less than his disciples because unlike them, he was able to spend more than a quarter of his life abroad publishing books that were in violation of Swedish laws and were also listed in the *Index* of the Catholic Church dating as early as the time of his scientific period.<sup>40</sup>

On his deathbed, Swedenborg harbored no resentment against the Protestant Church of Sweden recalling that the New Church had no ties with any ecclesiastical structures. For him it was of far greater importance to acknowledge the distinction between the natural world and the spiritual world.

One century and a half after Swedenborg's death, his mortal remains were sent home to be placed in an impressive tomb inside the Cathedral of Uppsala, a sublime token of esteem for the former "heretic." At this time it was discovered that the skull did not correspond with the rest of the

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<sup>39</sup>Edmund Swift, Jun., *Emanuel Swedenborg. The Man and his Works*, London, James Speirs, 1883, p. 210.

<sup>40</sup>Since 1739 according to the *Transactions of the International Swedenborg Congress* Held in connection with the Celebration of the Swedenborg Society's Centenary, London, July 4 to 8, 1910; third edition, London, Swedenborg Society, 1912, p. 19.

skeleton. It seems that an amateur of phrenology had stolen it and replaced it with an anonymous skull, which, in its turn, was replaced by a third skull. This story was the subject of much discussion until, some years ago, the real skull was at last found. It was then purchased by the Swedish government at an auction at Sotheby's and later on placed in the coffin in the Cathedral of Uppsala.<sup>41</sup>

In conclusion, one is tempted to compare this sordid story about skulls with the history of the doctrines of the New Church. When viewed in the context of Swedenborg's religious writings, the doctrines represent a beautiful unity, but when separated from them for selfish reasons, they are no longer of value.

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<sup>41</sup> *New Church Magazine*, Vol 97, No. 681, Spring 1978: D. Duckworth, *The Extraordinary Story of Swedenborg's Skull*. Vol. 98, No. 684. January-March 1979: Extract from *Sotheby's Sale Catalogue: Sotheby's Catalogue of Printed Books Relating to Masonry, Science and Phrenology* (Date of sale: March 6, 1978): 271. *Swedenborg's Skull*.

(To be continued)



Established in 1810, the Swedenborg Society is a registered charity, academic publisher, archive and museum. We organize a broad range of cultural events, lectures, exhibitions, educational workshops and film screenings, and are one of the oldest independent publishers in the world. This website features an online bookshop and room booking details, plus details regarding membership and our mailing list. The Swedenborg Society. Emanuel Swedenborg (1688 – 1772) was a Swedish scientist, philosopher, theologian, revelator, and Christian mystic. He is best known for his book on the afterlife, *Heaven and Hell* (1758). Swedenborg had a prolific career as an inventor and scientist. In 1741, at the age of 53, he entered into a spiritual phase in which he began to experience dreams and visions, beginning on Easter weekend of April 6, 1744. The Swedenborg Foundation is your connection to spiritual resources—including books, webcasts, and social media communities—based on Emanuel Swedenborg’s explorations of the afterlife. We offer all of Swedenborg’s theological writings online. Wondering where to start? Get some pointers in “Who Was Swedenborg? What Should I Read?” or jump straight into the free downloads. Our YouTube channel, *offTheLeftEye*, explores a great range of spiritual topics from Swedenborg’s writings. Explore all of our shows here.